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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRATISLAVA 000771

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR, R, AND P

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TAGS: PREL KDEM KPAO EAID PHUM KMPI LO

SUBJECT: COMBATING EXTREMISM IN SLOVAKIA

Classified By: DCM Lawrence R. Silverman for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶11. (C) Summary. The GOS and the USG have actively funded programs to combat extremism and intolerance in Slovakia. Extremism here takes the form of a privately organized Neo-Nazi movement, which usually targets the Roma minority and the small Jewish population. Violent attacks have occurred in the past years, as well as hate speech, overt cases of discrimination, and instances of vandalism, although less frequently than in past years. The police continually monitor known extremists and maintain teams of trained specialists. The small and fragmented Muslim community has not produced any extremist behavior. However, GOS and USG programming has included outreach events to the Muslim community, as well as to the general public about human rights and tolerance. End Summary

The Neo-Nazi Movement

¶12. (SBU) Extremist behavior in Slovakia is usually carried out by a fairly organized Neo-Nazi movement. Ministry of Interior (MOI) officials estimate that there are approximately 500 active Neo-Nazis operating in Slovakia, with about 3,000 to 5,000 sympathizers. There are occasional violent attacks directed toward the Roma minority or the small Jewish population. Vandalism and destruction of Jewish cultural property is also reported, although perhaps less frequently than in the past. Some organized extremist groups were able to obtain permits to openly meet for Slovak national holidays associated with the Nazi puppet state headed by the War criminal Tiso.

¶13. (C) Over the past three to four years, police have begun to crack down on Neo-Nazi groups. Trained specialists and advisors work to identify active members and make arrests. There have been two important Bratislava raids in the past and an important arrest of a major organizer. Some meetings are legal and announced beforehand, which helps the police. The MOI advisor on extremism told embiffs that the MOI has registered certain groups allowing them to exist legally, in order to be better informed about their activities. Meanwhile, NGOs try to counter these groups by publicly criticizing their behavior, organizing counter-demonstrations, and urging tolerance.

Islam in Slovakia

¶14. (C) The small Muslim community in Slovakia comprises mostly of individuals who immigrated to the former Czechoslovakia under communism for education and employment opportunities. Most of these migrants now have citizenship and are integrated into Slovak society. International students and newer migrants are more religious, but the community is not large enough to support the building of a mosque. The community is very diverse and fragmented, and there is no evidence of Muslim extremism.

¶15. (C) Post has supported outreach programming targeting Muslims in Slovakia. In 2004, the embassy invited a speaker on US-Arab relations and hosted an Iftar dinner during Ramadan for the small community. We also will be speaking at a Slovak organized event on October 2 to commemorate the life of slain journalist Daniel Pearl. Embiffs frequently talk to government interlocutors and religious leaders about reforming the Law on Religious Registration. In order for Islam to become an official religion, there must be 20,000 permanent resident adherents. The GOS is hesitant to lower the prohibitive registration requirement, for all religions, because the government is obligated to provide subsidies and pay the salaries for the clergy. A number of politicians have also vocalized objections to Islam becoming an official religion since the overwhelming majority of Slovaks are Catholic.

State Department and Other USG-Funded Programs

¶16. (U) USAID and SEED funded programming in Slovakia has wrapped down after operating more than ten years in-country. The only on-going program is the multi-regional USAID Roma

project designed to improve mutual understanding by encouraging integrated decision-making strategies and highlighting issues at the national level. The project has had several successes, such as the adoption of a government program to fund social workers in targeted Roma communities in which residents live far below the poverty line. Other activities include supporting microgrants to local groups after completing detailed needs surveys, localized conflict management training, and national round table discussions.

17. (SBU) In recent years, the U.S. Embassy Democracy Commission grants supported local NGO activities to help

fight extremism and discrimination. Nearly 30 percent of the total number of grants went to support activities working with minorities, women, and children. Several of these grants have had a lasting impact on Slovak society. For example, the Democracy Commission in 2004 supported the production of three documentaries that show Roma success stories to balance somewhat sensationalized stories in the press. These documentaries continue to be used at cultural events and aired on television.

Local NGO Efforts

18. (U) One of the most visible NGOs working to combat extremism in Slovakia is the NGO People Against Racism. The organization works with youth, police, and government officials as their constituents. The embassy provided a democracy commission grant in 2003 to this organization to study how minorities were portrayed in the press and donated excess furniture items to their office after an arson attack. They also operate a monitoring center for extremist behavior funded by the European Union. Other activities include:

- police training about Neo-Nazi symbology and behavior
- human rights education in schools
- public lectures and demonstrations about tolerance at youth sporting events
- conference organization
- daily press monitoring
- participation on governmental advisory committees
- public statements in the press about extremist violence

People Against Racism is at the forefront of opposition to the activities of the Neo-Nazi, Pospolitost group. Several other Slovak organizations, such as Citizen and Democracy and the Milan Simecka Foundation, have also managed programs that support human rights education in schools.

19. (U) The organization League of Human Rights Activists offers pro-bono legal representation for victims of extremist attacks and cases of discrimination. They are currently representing several cases at the Supreme Court, Constitutional Court, and the European Court of Human Rights. They also maintain a wide system of human rights monitors that alerts the organization about people that need legal assistance and help working with police.

Instances of Hate Speech

110. (C) Occasionally certain Slovak politicians use racial slurs and hate speech as a tool to increase their popularity and appeal to voters in areas with large Roma communities, unemployment, and higher crime. The mayor of Zilina, who is the Chairman of the Slovak Nationalist Party (SNS), has made several negative statements about Roma. In 2003, he offered to pay for Roma males to be sterilized in response to a scandal about alleged coerced sterilization of Roma women. There were several unsuccessful attempts to investigate and prosecute the Zilina mayor for hate speech.

111. (U) As it is illegal in Slovakia to defame nationalities or to belittle the Holocaust, the Slovak police monitor internet web pages that host hate speech and try to arrest or fine the authors. The police frequently complain that most of these sites are hosted on U.S. web servers because of more liberal freedom of speech laws. When warranted the Slovak police have requested the assistance of U.S. law enforcement to help with joint investigations.

112. (C) Post monitors the press daily for occurrences of hate speech. Officers include any instances found in the Human Rights Report, Religious Freedom Report, and special demarches, such as last years report on Anti-Semitism. Emboffs often encourage politicians to make public statements against acts of violence when they occur.

Host Government Efforts

113. (U) The GOS have organized several comprehensive

anti-discrimination campaigns both from EU sources and the GOS budget. The Section for Human Rights at the Government Office has managed the Government Action Plan against Xenophobia and Intolerance and expanded offices and programs concentrating on Roma Affairs. Most programs have been incorporated into public education and existing legislation. In 2004, Slovakia passed a new anti-discrimination law, which provides the framework for affirmative action and pro bono legal representation. The Slovak Republic has also passed other action plans delineating benchmarks from the on-going improvement of education and housing for the Roma minority.

Comment

¶14. (C) Slovakia is combating extremism on several fronts. The law enforcement and legislative aspects have improved over the past few years. However, the problem persists, particularly in the investigation and prosecution of extremists. Several lawyers are seeking to find cases that would test the new anti-discrimination law to put it actively into practice, which they feel would begin to change the language and actions of Slovak society in general.

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